

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 44 without my signature.

Recently, some absentee voters in one county received their official ballots and returned them to election officials before they received their sample ballots containing candidate statements. In order to ensure that absentee voters are able to review candidate statements before submitting their ballots, this bill would require qualified candidates' statements, which are normally mailed to voters with the sample ballots several weeks before an election, to also be distributed with absentee ballots.

This bill unnecessarily imposes additional costs on local election officials. First, the proponents have not demonstrated a widespread problem. We should not impose additional costs on all local governments because of what thus far appears to be an isolated incident. Second, absentee voters are not forced to submit their ballot before receiving the candidate statements. Any absentee voter choosing to submit his or her ballot well before the day of the election does so knowing that all relevant information about a candidate, regardless of the source, may not be yet available. That said, the growing popularity of absentee voting warrants consideration of methods to increase efficiency in the distribution of election materials. Although I cannot support this measure, I would be open to other alternatives that do not impose unnecessary costs upon local governments.

For these reasons, I am returning this bill without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger